

REMARKS

Introduction

In the non-final Office Action mailed June 12, 2003 (Paper No. 15), the Examiner rejected claims 35-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, and rejected claims 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,131,085 to Rossides ("Rossides"). In this response, applicants amend claim 34. Accordingly, claims 32-42 are presently pending. For the reasons set forth and detailed below, applicants submit that the pending claims are now all in condition for allowance.

Prior Art Rejection

The Examiner rejected claims 32-34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over Rossides. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Applicants' technology is directed to data structures used to represent interaction scripts. Interaction scripts are used by customer service representatives and others to guide a real-time interview with an interviewee or respondent, such as a customer that has phoned a customer service center, or a potential customer that has been called for a sales call. Each script identifies a number of questions that may be asked by the interviewer of a respondent. Each question, represented by a question "node" or "substructure" in the script, is connected to nodes for one or more answers that the respondent may give in response to the question. The nodes or substructures representing the answers anticipated for a particular question are connected to the question's node or substructure by line segments called edges. Edges or links also connect the nodes or substructures representing each answer to the next question that the interviewer will ask if the respondent supplies the answer. In some cases, for a particular answer, the script specifies a database query that, when executed, determines the next question that will be asked after that answer is given.

Rather than facilitating an interview of a respondent by an interviewer, Rossides is concerned with building a knowledge database. Any user using the knowledge database can read questions and answers stored in the knowledge database, and can add either a question or an answer to the questions and answers contained by the

database. As noted by the Examiner, Rossides represents the questions and answers stored in its knowledge database using graphs. In Figure 30B, Rossides shows a graph containing nodes representing both questions and answers. In Figure 30B, Rossides makes clear that circular nodes 3025, 3027, 3028, 3029, and 3030 all represent questions, while rectangular node 3026 represents an answer. In particular, arrows show that the answer represented by answer node 3026 is an answer to the questions represented by question nodes 3025, 3027, 3029, and 3030. Further, each arrow from a first circular question node to a second circular question node identifies the second circular question node as a more specific question ("MS-Q") relative to the first question node. For example, circular question node 3028, representing the question "What's IBM's phone number for tech support?" (see 162:32), is a more specific question than the question posed by question node 3025, "What's IBM's phone number?" Rossides makes very clear that the content of question node 3028 is not an answer to the question posed by node 3025, it is merely another question that is more specific than that posed by node 3025. Rather, the only answer shown to the question represented by node 3025 is the answer represented by answer node 3026, that is, "800-333-4444."

Claim 32 recites "a plurality of question substructures, each question substructure: specifying a question to be asked of the respondent, and containing one or more answer substructure identifiers each identifying an answer substructure; and a plurality of answer substructures, each answer substructure being identified by an answer substructure identifier, (and) specifying an answer anticipated from the respondent in response to question substructures containing the answer structure identifier of the answer substructure." The Examiner asserts that one of Rossides' question nodes, such as question node 3025, corresponds to applicants' recited question substructure, while another of Rossides' nodes that constitutes a more specific question with response to the first question node, such as question node 3028, corresponds to applicants' recited answer. Applicants respectfully submit that more specific question nodes such as question node 3028 in no way specify an answer anticipated from the respondent in response to question substructures as recited. To

the contrary, Rossides specifically identifies answer nodes, and does not identify any more specific question node as specifying an answer as recited. Indeed, merely looking at the questions represented by these two nodes, i.e., "What's IBM's phone number?" and "What's IBM's phone number for tech support?", the second question is clearly not an answer to the first question. Of the nodes shown in Figure 30B, only answer node 3026 represents an answer to the question represented by question node 3025. The standard for a proper rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 is a high one, requiring every recited element of a rejected claim to be *identically disclosed* in a single prior art reference. Applicants submit that Rossides' characterization of more specific question nodes such as question node 3028 as questions rather than answers precludes Rossides from satisfying this standard for claim 32.

Claim 33 similarly recites "content of a first question; content of a first answer to the first question; (and) . . . information uniquely identifying a second question that is to be posed if, when the first question is posed, the first answer is given." As discussed above in conjunction with claim 32, Rossides in no way discloses the recited first answer to the first question that, if given when the first question is posed, causes a second question to be posed. Claim 33 further recites "information specifying a query that, when executed, generates information uniquely identifying a third question to be posed if, when the first question is posed, the second answer is given." Applicants can find no mention in Rossides of queries that are executed to select a new question to be posed when a particular answer is given to an earlier-posed question. For these reasons, applicants submit that the standard required by 35 U.S.C. § 102 has not been satisfied for claim 33.

Claim 34 recites features similar to those of claim 33, and is patentable over Rossides for the reasons discussed above.

Based upon the foregoing, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) with respect to all of the claims.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, First Paragraph

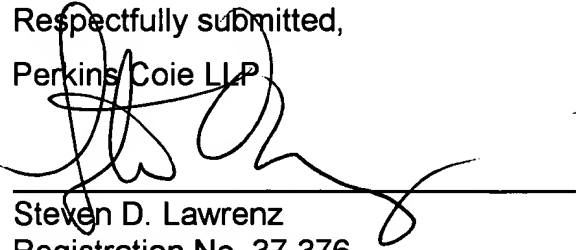
The Examiner rejected claims 35-42 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, for failing to provide support for the term "edges," which occurs in claims 35, 37, and 42. Applicants submit that the application as filed contains proper support for this term. In particular, applicants believe that one of ordinary skill in the art would recognize the structure shown in Figure 1 as a graph or a tree, in which *nodes* (ovals, such as ovals 11, 13a, and 15a) are connected by *edges* (line segments, such as the line segment connecting oval 11 to oval 13a). See, for example, definition no. 2 for *edge* in Microsoft Computer Dictionary, 5th Edition, 2002, page 185: "in data structures, a link between two nodes on a tree or graph." This is especially true in view of the following sentence occurring at page 19, lines 17-18 of the application as filed: "Graphically, a 'script' may be represented by a graph whose nodes are pages, sets of questions, or even individual questions," and the sentence occurring at page 19, lines 29-30 of the application as filed: "Internally, in a graphical representation, scripts are implemented with 'paths' and branches are implemented with 'edges.'" In view of the foregoing, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this rejection.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, applicants submit that all of the claims pending in the application are allowable. Accordingly, a prompt notice of allowance is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone interview would expedite examination of this application, he is encouraged to call the undersigned at 206-359-6373.

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